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HAL Subcommittee hearing in Kalamazoo reaffirms importance of state arts funding

KALAMAZOO – Speakers testified on the importance of maintaining funding for the History Arts and Libraries budget during a hearing held Tuesday in Kalamazoo, said Sen. Tom George, chair of the Senate Appropriations HAL Subcommittee.

“The HAL budget is largely dependent on general fund dollars, which is why it is subject to fluctuations from year to year,” said George, R-Texas Township. Because of its strong arts community, the Kalamazoo area benefits greatly from state arts funding.”

Before a nearly full auditorium in Kalamazoo’s Epic Center, Sens. George and Michelle McManus, R-Lake Leelanau, heard testimony on topics ranging from Michigan Commission on Arts and Cultural Affairs grants to historic preservation. Many speakers testified to the benefits of continued state arts funding including: Kalamazoo Mayor Robert Jones; Jim Bridenstine, president of the Kalamazoo Institute for Arts; Mike Mueller, president of the Kalamazoo Symphony Orchestra; and Allison Williams, a local actor who used a state art grant to create a show that has been touring Canada and soon will be shown off-Broadway in New York.

“I am concerned about dollars being diverted from the arts to instead fund the governor’s ‘cool cities’ projects,” George said. “I will work to ensure that arts grants continue to be awarded on a competitive basis and not be political give-aways.”

The legislation is scheduled to be reported out of the Senate Appropriations HAL Subcommittee later this week.

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